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ABSTRACT

Item content of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is catagorized using 100 items from a half-length sample TOEFL published by Educational Testing Service (ETS), 120 items from Section II and 150 from the Section IV of Test of English as a Foreign Language (Gruber and Gruber), and 200 items from How to Prepare for the TOEFL by Pamela J. Sharpe. Designation of the three major catagories of item types as simple sentence, combined sentences, and word choice reveals Gruber's manual, although prescriptive, as much closer to the sample TOEFL's in the percentage of questions given to a particular catagory than is Sharpe's. The actual TOEFL is a more comprehensive test than discussed in either of the manuals, and provides an assessment of language as it is used, rather than emphasizing a prescriptive set of rules. (RL)

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My Encounter with the TOEFL: Studying the Structure and Written Expression Section

For the last two years I have been teaching a class in Test Preparation for the American Language Institute at San Diego State University. I give our international students general advice on coping with American standardized tests and occasionally help more advanced students with the examinations required for graduate school--the GRE or the GMAT. My main emphasis, however, is preparation for the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) because almost all of our students need an acceptable score on this test in order to enter an American university or college. In my class, I try to simulate the actual examination conditions as much as possible, have the students take a section of the exam from one of the TOEFL manuals, collect the separate answer sheets, and then go over the answers. In this way the students get immediate feedback on the section they have just completed, and I also have their "unretouched" answers, answers which will show me not only how each student is progressing individually but also which questions are most

difficult for the class as a whole. I will go over these questions again, with further examples, on the following meeting. In using the various study manuals in this way for my class, I have become aware that there are considerable differences between them in quality, in approach, and in format.

One of the first questions my students ask me is "Which manual should I buy? Which one will best prepare me for the TOEFL?" Currently, there are three readily available TOEFL manuals on the market: Test of English as as a Foreign Language by Edward C. Gruber and Gary R. Gruber (New York: Monarch, 1977), Barron's How to Prepare for the TOEFL by Pamela J. Sharpe (Woodbury, N. Y.: Barron, 1977), and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) by Harriet N. Moreno, Edith H. Babin and Carole V. Cordes (New York: Arco, 1978). (Also available, but not useful for individual study is The Ala TOEFL Course, 2nd ed., by William S. Annand [Washington: American Language Academy, 1979], which consists of a student's package and a teacher's package including classwork and homework books, a teacher's guide, a practice test, and cassette tapes for listening comprehension exercises.) Although the Arco manual does have the advantage of containing complete recordings on three of six Listening Comprehension sections, it does not contain an explanation for any of the answers except,

unaccountably, for items 16 through 40 only in the Structure and Written Expression section of the test. Since I believe the explanation of answers to be a necessary ingredient for any self-help manual, I decided to eliminate this book from my research.

Between the other two manuals--the Gruber and the Sharpe--it is not so easy to choose. Both have a large vocabulary review section and Sharpe also includes recordings for a part of each Listening Comprehension section. With regard to Structure and Written Expression (Section II), both manuals not only explain all the answers but also have a large grammar review section. The approaches used here are, however, quite different. Gruber includes an eighty-two page "TOEFL Grammar and Usage Refresher" at the back of his book which is traditional in approach, emphasizing first "sentence sense"--the organization of the English sentence into subject, verb and complement, then moving on to "parts of speech", "phrases", and "clauses", and concluding with "sentence logic", "sentence coherence" and "word effectiveness". There is no close relationship between the abridgment and the explanation of answers: the review will help the student to score well on Gruber's model examinations but it must be absorbed separately. One criticism I have of Gruber's text is that many of the answer explanations are not helpful. For instance, concerning the erroneous expression "anyone's else problems," Gruber cautions,"Say anyone else's, somebody else's, etc. Do not say anyone's else, somebody's else" (p.173).

The rule for this situation is elucidated in the grammar review section: "the possessive case is indicated in the compound noun by adding an apostrophe and 's' to the last word in the unit . . ." (p. 226), but nowhere does Gruber refer the poor student to this rule. He also makes value judgments with no explanation: "screaming's of the wind" is, he writes, "an absurd idea" (p. 59). "But what", my bright students will ask me, "about 'Season's Greetings'?"

In contrast to Gruber, Sharpe's sixty-page "Review of Structure and Written Expression" is divided into seventy-three "problems"--fifty-two "structural patterns" and twenty-one "stylistic problems"--and the emphasis is on usage rather than prescription. Any attempt, however, to study the review section separately would be mind boggling because there is so little logical continuity within the individual sub-groups. For example, there are twenty-two different patterns with verbs and they jump from complement choice determined by main verb to correct formation of perfect tenses, to auxilliary choice, then back to complement choice, tense choice, choice of modal, and so on. On the other hand, this is a very good review to study in conjunction with Sharpe's sample tests. For each question asked, there is, in the answer explanation section, a reference to a particular problem number where the student, if he has missed that question, can look back to a paradigm of the word order of that particular structure followed by a number of examples.

In recommending a manual to my students, I have followed the procedure of bringing both books to class, explaining the differences between them, and finally recommending that the student pick the book which he finds most easy to work with depending on his temperament and on the type of English instruction he has previously received or is receiving now. Privately, however, as I became more and more aware of the different methods and idealogies presented by the two manuals, I began to wonder how closely they corresponded to each other and, more importantly, to the actual TOEFL in terms of the types of items tested and in the incidence of those items. I decided to study the TOEFL in depth and also to limit my study to the Structure and Written Expression Section of the new-format TOEFL. I also decided to begin with Sharpe's book because it was the only one in which each answer was classified into a system. I believed the organization of that system to be quite confusing but decided I could rearrange the catagories more logically after I had catalogued them.

At this same time, I thought it would be a good idea to review the research done on the TOEFL to find out first if any other studies had been done on this problem and secondly, what type of research was being done. I also put in a request at the SDSU Test Office for an experimental copy of the TOEFL to study. There is so much work being done on testing at the present time that I initially believed

my work would be mainly a compiling of published research, supplemented by my study of the manuals and the actual test, and by any information I could get from Educational Testing Service--the company entrusted with the development, publication and administration of TOEFL. Accordingly, I sent off a letter to ETS and began combing the language journals for research on the TOEFL. What I came up with could well be symbolized by one of the "black holes" currently fascinating astronomers--a surprisingly empty space into which a great deal of energy has apparently been poured but which is impossible to visualize and nearly impossible to study.

First of all, the only published research on the TOEFL that I have been able to discover has been done either by someone working for ETS or someone working under their auspices. Secondly, the published research is incredibly scanty. The only published articles I found, which had even vaguely to do with my subject were three: (1) "A Comparison of Scores Earned in TOEFL by Native American College Students and Foreign Applicants to U. S. Colleges" by William H. Angoff and Auriel T. Sharon--both employees of ETS (Papers on Language Testing 1967-1974, ed. Leslie Palmer and Bernard Spolsky [Washington: TESOL, 1975], 154-163); (2) "The TOEFL and Domestic Students: Conclusively Inappropriate" by Dixon C. Johnson, a study similar to Angoff and Sharon's and conducted under the auspices of ETS (TESOL Quarterly 11 [1977], 79-86); and (3) "Tests: Yardsticks of English Proficiency" by Paul J. Angelis of ETS (NAFSA Newsletter 29 [March 1978], 1,5).

The first article compares the TOEFL scores of native American students with those of foreign students; the second studies the scores of native American students only. Both conclude that the TOEFL is not appropriate for native speakers. The form of the TOEFL used for both of these evaluations was the now obsolete five-part form in which Structure and Writing are two separate sections and from which the item format in the Structure Section--a short conversation between two speakers--has since been eliminated. Neither study was helpful for my purposes.

The third article, "Tests: Yardsticks of English Proficiency", summarizes the research completed, in progress, and planned at ETS for TOEFL and notes that "a regular continuous program of research has been in operation only since 1976" (p. 1), even though the test itself has been given since 1963. What Angelis lists as being accomplished are two projects: the first--subject of the Angoff/Sharon and Dixon articles--"the investigation of the performance of native English speakers of [sic] TOEFL," and the second, "the appropriateness of TOEFL for non-natives in comparison with three native speaker tests: the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE)" (p.5), all, incidentally, published by ETS. A third study considering the development of an optional TOEFL section on speaking ability is now in progress and a "number of additional projects have been planned and are now pending approval of the TOEFL research committee" (p.5).

One of these--a study of TOEFL performance by language background--sounds as if it would be most helpful if it is approved and conducted.

In addition to the published research, I obtained three documents from ETS regarding TOEFL. The first, requested by my program director, was a summary of "Research Studies Involving the Test of English as a Foreign Language." All of the thirteen studies described were validity studies and were based on the now obsolete five-part TOEFL format. The last two documents arrived from ETS in response to my second request for information about the various grammatical or stylistic catagories used in selecting items for the TOEFL. They were: "An Evaluation of Alternative Item Formats for Testing English as a Foreign Language" by Lewis W. Pike, and a paper by Miriam Levin summarizing the results of Pike's study. Pike tested various item formats with Japanese, Chilean and Peruvian students and his recommendations for change in format reflect the various changes that were in fact made in the TOEFL to produce the new format. This is an excellent study for those who wish to understand the difference in format between the two tests. As far as item content goes however, it is a different matter. Pike himself states in the "Limitations" section of his report that "the study was focused on comparisons among item formats, and was not directly concerned with differences in item content within a givin item format, which can be substantial. Items in the

English Structure format, for example, may differ considerably in the emphasis given to standard usage. A new English Structure subtest differing in emphasis on standard usage could yield quite different results, particularly if the candidate groups differed in the emphasis given to formal English usage in their learning of English as a second language"([Princeton: ETS, 1976] , p.69). Since item content, not format, was the subject of my request and my study, this report was like all the other information I could find--not much help.

Considering the power wielded by the TOEFL--an acceptable score on this examination is an unwaiveable entrance requirement for most U.S. universities--it seems to me unbelievable how little research and information is available. In his booklet, Testing and the Testing Industry: A Third View, John D. Williams comments on the secrecy that characterizes the testing industry and adds: "Kohn (1975) in an attempt to gather information about the testing industry, talked to representatives from the major testing firms. None of the people he talked to was willing or able to estimate the number of students tested each year in the United States. They also would not reveal how many tests their individual companies had sold or scored. The only comment made in regard to overall size of the testing industry intimated that it was too small, and should necessarily become larger"([Grand Forks: University of No. Dakota, 1976], p.18).

In the Handbook for TOEFL Applicants, the TOEFL is disassociated from all the schools or manuals that "claim to prepare individuals specifically for TOEFL or that promise them high scores on the test" ([Princeton: ETS, 1977]p.2). And, aside from a half-length sample test available by mail for $2.00, there is no help coming from ETS either. TOEFL is listed in TESOL's 1977 bibliography on testing as "not available for use or inspection" (Marie Garcia-Jamor and David Birdsong, Testing in English as a Foreign Language: A Selected Annotated Bibliography [Washington: TESOL, 1977], p.23), a statement which I found, unfortunately, to be completely accurate. The results of my many requests for an experimental copy of the test--requests made by me personally to ETS, or by my program director and the SDSU Test Office for me--were first ignored, then refused. This, in spite of the fact that I would be supervised by a test office employee for the entire time I was studying the test, and that any notes I might make--on blank numbered pieces of paper--would be checked over by that employee to make sure I did not compromise the test by copying down any of the actual questions or answer choices.

In the meantime, I was still plodding along with my statistics. I had finished with the 200 questions (in 5 tests of 40 questions each) in Sharpe's manual and had made some preliminary observances. These were: (1) Out of

the 73 problems in Sharpe's grammar review section, 3 had no questions at all related to them, 23 had only one question and 22 had only two questions. This would agree with my earlier impression that many of the problems (or item-types) should be combined and simplified. (2) Of Sharpe's basic division into structure and style, 65% of the questions were considered structural patterns--heavily weighted in the catagories of verbs (30%) and modifiers (13%). The remaining 35%, classed as stylistic problems, fell mostly into the catagories of word choice (11%), agreement (9%), and parallel structure (9%).

Rather than do any modifications of Sharpe's catagories at this time, I decided to examine the Gruber tests to see how closely they related to those of Sharpe. About this time I also heard from the Test Office that I could not study the TOEFL examination privately and could only take the test at the same regularly scheduled time, and subject to the same conditions and restrictions as our foreign students. I had previously taken the TOEFL under these conditions and found them very obstructive to a careful study of the examination but I signed up for the next test anyway.

Gruber's TOEFL is somewhat different from Sharpe's in that he gives two separate Structure and Writing formats (Section II and Section IV) for each of three examinations. The second section is identical in format to that of Sharpe

and of the TOEFL--40 multiple choice items with four answer choices each--to be answered within a 25 minute time limit. In addition to studying the 120 items in Section II, I also decided to analyze the 150 items in Gruber's Section IV. Section IV is often included in the TOEFL when it is given in the United States. It is a 30 minute experimental section which consists of either an additional 30 question Reading Comprehension test or an additional 50 question Structure and Written Expression test. Since this section of the examination is used by ETS to obtain statistics on new test items, the student's score on this section is not computed in with his total score. It is probably a point against Gruber's manual that he does include this section since it is not really a part of the new TOEFL, but considering the restrictions placed upon my study of the actual TOEFL, it was nice for me to have the additional questions to analyze.

After working the first two tests in Gruber's Section II, I realized that Sharpe's catagories would not be at all sufficient. Gruber had many different types of problems from Sharpe and was not concerned with many of Sharpe's distinctions. At this time I decided to list all of Gruber's items on index cards, each card given over to a particular type of problem. I also entered Gruber's items into Sharpe's catagories to see how many of them fit. The difference between the types of items tested in the two manuals was considerable; only about 60% of Gruber's items fit into Sharpe's catagories.

Of those questions in Gruber's manual that did not fit into Sharpe's problems, I was able to isolate thirteen different item-types and seven more considerable expansions of Sharpe's item-types. Several of these item-types seemed to me to be important in a test of English proficiency. Some of them related to the correct formation of verbs: correctly formed finite verbs or verbals; correct formation of the passive voice; correct choice of aspect. Others were item-types such as degree of adjective or adverb; complementizer choice, and word order in the complement. If I could make only one distinction between the tests of Sharpe and those of Gruber I would say that Sharpe emphasizes structural items that can be presented in a pattern--often ignoring important items which do not fit a pattern--whereas Gruber emphasizes correctness of style--an emphasis that occasionally disintegrates into a hairsplitting pickiness.

At this time, with the next administration of the TOEFL rapidly approaching, I decided to make a very careful organization of all the item-types in Sharpe, Gruber, and in the half-length Sample TOEFL sent me by ETS so that I would have a very clear idea of what I was looking for before I took the next real TOEFL. I began by classifying the 20 items in the Structure and Written Expression Section of the Sample TOEFL in the same manner as I had classified those items in the manuals--placing them on

index cards according to item-types. Next, I went through these index cards, looking particularly for three things: (1) new item-types, (2) item-types that appeared in only one of the manuals and (3) item-types which were stressed in the sample test. These were the same things I had decided to concentrate on when I studied the actual test and I believed (correctly as it turned out) that the sample test would give me some leads about what I would find in the TOEFL. In the Sample TOEFL, I found three new item-types, four item-types covered by only one of the manuals and three stressed item-types--I classified an item-type as stressed if two or more questions dealt with it.

Finally, I began my most difficult task--classifying all these item-types I had collected. Condensing Sharpe's problems and augmenting them with those of Gruber and the Sample TOEFL was not too difficult; what was difficult was organizing the item-types into broad divisions. Many of the most elementary facts of English grammar were not tested (because almost anyone can answer them correctly) whereas a large percentage of the item-types that were tested were small points or exceptions. In an ordinary English grammar, these exceptions would be in footnotes and appendices; here they were the main body of knowledge to be absorbed. Finding some "logical organization" for what was often only a loose string of exceptions seemed like a contradiction in terms.

However, the fact that there were specific items tested meant that these items could be isolated and taught. I decided to approach catagorization by imagining I was teaching the items. Which would I teach first, which second? What would the student need to know before he could understand this item?

It was at this point that I decided to throw out the structure and style divisions and substitute those of structure and word choice or, in linguistic terms, syntax and semantics. Thus all the various agreement problems, under which I included tense agreement and parallel structure as well as pronoun reference, became problems in structure, not style--to me a more logical association. Next, I divided the structural items into those which could be understood in the context of the simple (one-clause) English sentence and those which related to sentences combined from more than one clause because I believed that this ordering would be easier and more natural to remember than large numbers of unrelated problems grouped under the various parts of speech. To summarize: what I came up with was an outline of item-types separated into three major divisions--first, those item-types which could be dealt with within the confines of the simple English sentence; secondly, those item-types which would require the student's understanding of the combined (complex and compound) English sentence; and third, those item-types

which dealt with word choice rather than grammar. Under the three divisions were twelve broad catagories--six for the simple sentence division and three each for the combined sentence and word choice. Both times when I took the TOEFL, I was looking for actual figures on divisions and catagories, but for item-types, only if they were new or if they were stressed. Having analyzed all those questions in the manuals and the sample TOEFL, I didn't have too much difficulty getting the information I needed although I had to work very quickly. As soon as I finished each examination, I entered the information I obtained on my list of item-types.

Appended to this article is the Catagorization of TOEFL Problems, a broad summary of my research and classification. I had to add two new item-types from the actual examinations which were not on the sample test or in the manuals but otherwise my list remains essentially the same. The top line of figures (underneath the name of the test) represents the number of items studied: 100 from the TOEFL; 120 from Gruber's Section II and 150 from his Section IV; and 200 from Sharpe. All the other figures represent percentages of item-types and not actual numbers of items. Also, although there is an item-type representing every question studied, in the Sharpe column there is much condensing and reshuffling of Sharpe's item-types. Because of this, I have incluced, in parentheses beside my percentage for a

particular item-type, the number or numbers given to that item-type in Sharpe's manual. If the number is preceded by an "S", it is from Sharpe's "Stylistic Problem" division; otherwise it is Sharpe's number for a "Structural Pattern".

Looking at the major divisions (major divisions and catagories are separated from the rest of the figures by horizontal lines accross the page), it is obvious that Gruber's manual is much closer to the TOEFL's I studied, in the percentage of questions given to a particular division or catagory than is Sharpe's. The percentage of questions devoted to those item-types which could be understood within the context of the "Simple Sentence" was 45% for the TOEFL, 37.7% and 39.3% for Gruber and 35% for Sharpe. For the "Combined Sentences Division" the percentage was 33% for the TOEFL, 40.2% and 36% for Gruber, and a disproportionately large 50% for Sharpe. Finally, for the "Word Choice Division", the percentage of questions was 22% for the TOEFL, and 22.1% and 24.7% for Gruber. Only 14.5% of Sharpe's questions were addressed to problems in this area.

Returning to the "Simple Sentence" division, the most stressed catagories in the TOEFL, and in the manuals also, were first, "Agreement" with 16% of the TOEFL questions and secondly, "Modifiers" with 13% of the questions. Although the manuals both cover the agreement item-types quite well, in the Sample TOEFL there were no item-types in this catagory. When ETS sent me the Sample TOEFL, presumably to help me in my research, I was cautioned that the sample test would not be at all indicative of either the range

or the type of items tested in the TOEFL itself. Nevertheless, since there is only one Sample TOEFL and since it is the only set of TOEFL-type questions endorsed by ETS, it should contain at least one or two items in this catagory of "agreement within the simple sentence" because this catagory covers such a large proportion of the actual test.

Individual item-types worth noting in the "Simple Sentence" division are first, "choice of quantifier" (5%, under the "Immediate Constituents" catagory) a new item-type found in the TOEFL questions which was not represented either in the manuals or in the Sample TOEFL. Secondly, "position of adverbs" (3% under "Modifiers") is an item-type that was also not in either of the manuals although two of the items in the Sample TOEFL dealt with this. I also included figures on "degree of adverb or adjective" (3%) because this was not an item-type in Sharpe, and on "adjective versus adverb" (7%) because of the large percentage of questions dealing with this item-type. Under the "Case" catagory--the item-type "preposition choice to express case" (4%) is listed because it is an item-type that was found neither in the manuals nor in the Sample TOEFL. There were only a few questions in the "Transformations" catagory and no one item-type received any particular emphasis. In the previously mentioned, heavily stressed "Agreement" catagory, the

questions were spread out rather evenly among the individual item-types. Only item-type #3, "parallel structure", received as much as 4% of the questions.

In the "Combined Sentences" division, the most stressed catagories were "Methods of Combining Sentences" (14%) and "Agreement", also with 14%. The two "Agreement" catagories, separated for purposes of this teaching outline, together make up a whopping 30% of the TOEFL's I took, clearly the most emphasized element in the TOEFL. Under "Agreement" for combined sentences, the individual items were again divided rather evenly with the heaviest stress going to "number agreement of pronoun with antecedent" (5%). In this area is also the biggest single difference between the TOEFL questions and Sharpe's manual. Under the heading of "agreement between verbs--special patterns," there are six different, often esoteric item-types such as the correct expression of the "subjunctive" or of "contrary-to-fact statements". Sharpe devotes 15½% of her questions to these item-types, but in the TOEFL questions I studied, only one item could be classified as belonging to this section.

Under the "Methods of Combining Sentences" catagory, two item-types covered all but one of the questions in this catagory. The first was "choice of conjunction" (8%), virtually ignored by Gruber and the second, "choice of case of relative pronoun" (5%), an item-type not found in Gruber's Section II and barely treated in Sharpe. The catagory "Ellipsis in Combined Sentences" received only 5%

of the questions and no particular stress on any one item-type.

In the final division, "Word Choice", the catagory that received the most attention was "Idiomatic Expressions" cornering 17% of the TOEFL questions, 8% of which belonged to the item-type "prepositional idioms" and another 8% belonging to "miscellaneous idioms". The catagory of "Confusing Words" with the "spelling problems" and "confusing verbs" so dear to Gruber was entirely ignored by the TOEFL. Also essentially ignored was the catagory on "Stylistic Preferences" except for the emphasis (4%) on prefering direct sentences over indirect or passive ones.

Gruber and Sharpe both appear to contain many item-types which are not found in the TOEFL questions, for example, Sharpe's emphasis on "special patterns" and Gruber's on "confusing words". I would, however, hesitate to remove any of them from my teaching outline without a larger sample of material from the actual examination and without a more precise way of studying it. Between the two TOEFL's that I studied specifically for item-types, the emphasis on and inclusion of various item-types was quite different. For example, the first test had three questions, or 7.5% of the entire section, on agreement between an indefinite singular subject and the verb. In the second TOEFL, there were no questions at all on this item. A third or fourth test would probably have a different emphasis

and might include several different item-types. On the other hand, I believe that the total of item-types for the TOEFL and the two manuals is essentially complete and that any new item-types would not amount to much of a percentage in that section of the test.

To return to my students' initial question, "What manual will best prepare me for the TOEFL?", I would now have to reply: "With regard to the Structure and Written Expression Section and with many reservations--Gruber's." Personally, I don't like his approach: it is prescriptive and the answer explanations are not adequate and are not connected to the review section. But Gruber's general percentages, both for major divisions and for catagories within those divisions, are much closer to the TOEFL questions I studied than are Sharpe's. If the student prefers the Sharpe book for its many-exampled problems and for the recordings of the Listening Comprehension Section, he should receive a list of catagories and item-types to emphasize in his study. Actually, this list should be given to those studying Gruber's manual too as there are also several areas of difference between this manual and the TOEFL itself.

The actual TOEFL seems a better and more comprehensive test than either of the manuals and it also seems to be moving towards an assessment of language as it is used rather than emphasizing a prescriptive set of rules. I have no hard statistics on this but I have taken several TOEFLs in both the new and the old formats, and there seem to me to be definite changes in this direction.

What I really object to--and I would like to conclude with this--is the arrogant attitude towards research expressed by Educational Testing Service. This company should have information available for scholars on the types and incidence of items chosen for their tests because, surely, they must use similar criteria in making up these tests, and ~~that~~ those criteria should be available for independent judgment by language scholars. Secondly, in view of the lack of statistics, or even evidence that there is research in progress to compile these statistics, the educational establishment ~~(that's us!)~~ should not allow ETS to make rules forbidding teachers and scholars to study the test for themselves under controlled conditions. By carefully studying the manuals and the Sample TOEFL, and by taking the TOEFL itself a number of times over a painfully drawn out period, I got some of the information I wanted but under conditions poor for either accuracy or completeness. If ETS puts out a good Test of English as a Foreign Language--and it appears that they do--then what is the rationale for this extreme secrecy? Scores on the TOEFL determine the educational future of most international students wishing to attend American universities. Any instrument which exercises power such as this should be available for independent researchers to examine.

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CATAGORIZATION OF TOEFL PROBLEMS

TOEFL	GRUBER II	GRUBER IV	SHARPE	
100	120	150	200*	
45	37.7	39.3	35**	I. THE SIMPLE (ONE CLAUSE) ENGLISH SENTENCE
7	5.2	6	3.5	A. Immediate Constituents (NP & VP)
				1. The Noun Phrase
	.8	.7		a. Determiners
				(1) Articles
				(2) Demonstratives
5				(3) Quantifiers (choice of)
	.8	.7	1(#28)***	b. Nouns
				(1) Count and non-count nouns
				2. The Verb Phrase
	3.6	4.6	2.5(#2)	a. Incorrectly formed finite verbs (tense and aspect)
13	9.2	12	9.5	B. Modifiers
	3.3	2.6	1.5(#31,32)	1. Nouns Functioning as Adjectives (includes hyphenated nouns and nouns in the possessive)
			2(#30,32)	2. Numbers with nouns--ordinal and cardinal
3				3. Position of adverbs (preverbal adverbs and intensifiers)
				4. Adverbs and Adjectives
3	1.7	2		a. Degree of adverb or adjective (correctly chosen and formed)
7	4.2	7.4	6(#36,37, 38)	b. Adjective vs. adverb (including adj. after verbs of the senses and special adjective forms e.g. "fast", "late" and "hard")

* Numbers in this row refer to number of items studied. Gruber has two sections on structure and writing: 120 questions were analysed for Section II and 150 questions were analysed for Section IV.

** These numbers and all the following numbers refer to the percentage of questions devoted to each division, catagory or individual item. The broad catagories and divisions are separated by horizontal lines accross the paper. The percentages given here are further broken down into specific items for Sharpe and Gruber. The TOEFL column contains entries for specific items only when that item seemed outstanding because of its frequency or because it was an item not tested in the manuals.

*** Sharpe has two major divisions of item types which she calls "Structural Patterns" and "Stylistic Problems". The numbers in parentheses following the Sharpe entries are the numbers given by Sharpe to her item types. If the number is preceded by "S", it is from the "Stylistic Problem division. Otherwise, it is the number of a "Structural Pattern."

TOEFL	GRUBER II	GRUBER IV	SHARPE	
6	3.3	4.6	3	C. Case--relationship of the NP to the VP
4	3.3	4.6	3(#24,25)	1. Subjective, objective, reflexive 2. Preposition choice to express case
3	4	1.3	1.5	D. Transformations
	1.7			1. Negative transformation (including "yet" vs. "already"; "some"vs. "any")
			1(#8)	2. Question transformation
	2.3	1.3		3. Passive transformation (including reverse psychological verbs)
			.5(#22)	4. Imperative transformation
16	16	15.4	17.5	E. Agreement
	1.7	.7		1. In number a. Between noun and determiner (demonstratives, quantifiers)
	2.5		1.5(S#10)	b. Between noun and possessive pronoun
	.2	.7	1(S#11)	c. With impersonal pronoun
	2.5	6.7	1.5(S#5,6)	d. Between subject and verb (1) With intervening modifiers or phrases of accompaniment
	.8	3.3	2.5(S#8)	(2) When subject is quantifier (indefinite singular or collective plural pronouns) or is preceded by quantifier
	.8			(3) When two subjects are joined by "and", "or", "either . . . or", or "neither . . .nor"
	2.5	2	1(S#7)	(4) In verb-subject patterns (after "there", "here")
	1.7	.7	.5(S#3) .5(S#4)	2. In tense a. Verb with time adverb b. Activities of the dead (use past tense)
4	3.3	1.3	8.5(S#13) .5(S#14)	3. In sentence structure--parallelism (in series or after inclusives)

TOEFL	GRUBER II	GRUBER IV	SHARPE	
33	40.2	36	50.5	II. COMBINED SENTENCES
14	11.1	9.3	10	A. Methods of Combining Sentences
	1.7			1. Conjoining
				a. Run-on-sentences
8	.4		4(#50, 51,52)	b. Choice of conjunctions--form, meaning and use
				2. Embedding
				a. Relativization
1				(1) Word order in relative clause
				(2) Choice of relative pronoun
	1.7	.7	2(#26)	(a) "who/shom" vs. "which"
5		4.6	.5(#27)	(b) Choice of case
				b. Complementizing
	1.2			(1) Word order in complement
	3.6	.7	1.5(#49)	(2) Complementizer choice (including "whether or not"; "if")
	2.5	3.3	.5(#23)	(3) The "possessive + ing complementizer
			1.5(#33,34)	(4) Cause and result with modifiers--"so . . . that"; "such . . . that"
5	5.4	10.6	15.5	B. Ellipsis in Combined Sentences
			2(#18,19)	1. Tag questions
		1.3	2(#20,21)	2. Negative and affirmative agreement
.5				3. "Do" and "do so" as substitutes for preceding verbs and verb phrases
			2(#48)	4. Connective patterns--"as well as"; "not only . . . but also"; "both . . . and"; "not . . . but" (inclusives and exclusives)
				5. Comparative patterns
	2.5	.7	7.5(#41,43, 44,45,46,47	a. "more . . . than"; "the same as"; etc.
	.4	3.3		b. Improper ellipsis of compared item
				6. Verbal Phrases
	.8	1.3		a. Incorrectly formed verbal phrases
	1.7	4	2(S#12)	b. Dangling or ambibuous modifiers

TOEFL	GRUBER II	GRUBER IV	SHARPE	
14	23.7	16.1	25	C. Agreement in Combined Sentences
	5.9	1.4	2(S#1,2)	1. Between verbs
	4.2	.7		a. Tense Consistency
	2.5		6(#1)	b. Choice of aspect
				c. Verbs which require infinitive or -ing forms in complement
	.8		4.5(#3,4, 5,6,7,9&16)	d. Special patterns (1) Verbs which require verb word or participle in complement
	2.5	4.7	3.5(#11)	(2) Condition and result
		1.3	1(#13)	(3)Contrary to fact statements
		.7	1.5(#15)	(4) Impersonal expressions
	.8	.7	3(#14)	(5) Subjunctives
			2(#10,12)	(6) Desires and unfulfilled desires in past
				2. Between noun and pronoun--especially with indefinites
5	2.9	3.3	1.5(S#9)	a. Number agreement of pronoun with antecedent
	3.3	1.3		b. Missing or ambiguous antecedent
	.8	2		c. Case agreement--noun with pronoun in apposition
22	22.1	24.7	14.5	III. WORD CHOICE
17	13	4	5	A. Idiomatic Expressions
	2.7	.7		1. 2 or 3 word verbs
8	6.5	2	4(#39,S#21)	2. Prepositional idioms
8	3.8	1.3	1(#35)	3. Miscellaneous idioms
0	6.6	9.3	2.5	B. Confusing Words
	2.5	2	2.5(S#18)	1. Confusing verbs
	3.3	6		2. Spelling problems (e.g. "there", "their")
	.8	1.3		3. Wrong form of word used which conflicts with meaning, not grammar, of sentence
5	2.5	11.4	7	C. Stylistic Preferences *
		2.7	1(S#12,17)	1. Avoid using words with the same or similar meaning consecutively in a sentence (includes double negative and double subject)
4	.4		.5(S#15)	2. Prefer direct statements to indirect or passive ones
	2.1	8.7	5.5(S#19,20)	3. Prefer formal written style. Avoid slang expressions or colloquial expressions(e.g. "like" vs. "as"; "reason is because"; "due to"

* Here is some additional general advice to students on TOEFL stylistic preferences: (1) Prefer short overlong statements (even if short statement is a cliche); (2) Prefer an idiom over a non-idiom; (3) When 2 answers (or more) are correct, prefer the most obvious.

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